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THE
DEVOTION FAMILY
OF BROOKLINE

By
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PUBLICATIONS, NO. 14.

THE DEVOTION* FAMILY OF BROOKLINE.

BY SUSAN VINING GRIGGS.

1. EDWARD DEVOTION, said by tradition to be the ancestor of all of that name in New England, was of French descent and of Huguenot origin, the family originally coming from La Rochelle in France.

There is said to be an ancient coat-of-arms belonging to the family, dating from the 15th century, with the motto, "*Tout pour Meilleur*," in English "All for the best."

All that is positively known, however, is that Edward Devotion was born in 1621 and that in 1645 he was an unmarried man living "in that part of Boston called Muddy River," now Brookline, where, not having an original grant of land, he purchased several acres of Wm. Salter of Boston, to whom the land had been granted but a short time before.

That year he took two important steps in life, for he joined the church and took the freeman's oath—thus proving himself to have been a man of exemplary character. He married soon after. Who his wife was we do not know, but we do know that her name was Mary. In February, 1649, we find the baptism of his first child and of his wife, Mary. They were both baptized the same day; the child at the First Church in Boston, the mother by the Apostle Eliot of Roxbury.

In 1653 we find him chosen to oversee fences at Muddy River. In 1654 he is chosen Constable; and we are told that "The office of constable was an important one. He was collector of taxes as well as preserver of the peace. More time for a hundred years was taken up in choosing, excusing and fining this officer than in doing all the other town meeting business." Edward Devotion seems to have been well fitted for

* Recent investigations show that a family whose head was Pierre de la Barre de Vaution were living in Rochelle about the time that Edward Devotion came to America, and a similarity in their coat-of-arms, to that described as belonging to the American Devotions, makes it extremely probable that Edward Devotion and his ancestors were of this family, and may have taken their name from the name of their ancestral home. The sound of *de Vaution* and *Devotion* are exactly alike when anglicized, and the change in the spelling of the name is a very slight one for those times when people "were not so illiterate that they could spell their name only one way."

the office, as responsible as it was, for we find him many times afterward chosen to fill the position.

In 1661 he is chosen for "Perambulation between Muddy River and Cambridge, and between Muddy River and Roxbury." In 1663 we find him again as constable. In 1664 we again find him in the office of "perambulator," and in 1671 again as constable. In 1674 we find his tax rate to be £3, 8s, which was one of the largest in Brookline. In 1676 he is chosen to "inspect the town to keep order." In 1681 we find him chosen as "tithingman" for Muddy River. In 1693, as appears by the Brookline records, the Roxbury people agreed that the people of Muddy River might worship at their house, bearing one-fifth of the expense, which was £6, 4s. They had a "raising" and the bill of the expenses and provisions was £20, 15s. On the list of "our brethren and neighbors of Muddy River" who contributed towards the building of this meeting-house, we find the name of Edward Devotion, who gave the sum of £5. This generosity and his office of "tithingman" would indicate that he was more than ordinarily interested in religious affairs. He was a member of the Apostle John Eliot's church, and his burial is recorded on the original old records in the hand writing of Eliot thus: "1685-7-23 Father Devotion buried."

His estate was appraised:—

Homestead, housing, orchard, marsh and other lands,	£351, 10s
Cows, horses, sheep and swine	50
Debts due the estate	270
Wavering debts	7
Other items	30, 4

£708, 14s

Edward Devotion's children were:—

- ✓ i. Mary.—Baptized at First Church in Boston Feb. 25, 1649, "aged about four days." She married, Feb. 6, 1668, John Davis of Roxbury, and when she died, Jan. 15, 1684, Eliot records her as "The godly wife of John Davis, senior." Savage in his "Genealogical Dictionary" gives this same date and same church for the baptism of Edward, aged four days. If there was such a baptism Edward was a twin to Mary, and must have died young, as another son was named Edward in 1663. As the old church records give the baptism of Mary whom Savage does not mention, and *not* the baptism of Edward, it is likely that the exchange of names is a misprint in Savage's book.

+ see Savage's Dictionary, Davis's name.

- ii. Elizabeth.—Baptized in Boston April 20, 1651. She married, Sept. 2, 1674, Joseph Weld of Roxbury, and died Feb. 17, 1679, of small-pox.
- iii. Martha.—Baptized in Roxbury March 13, 1653. She married, Sept. 2, 1674, John Ruggles of Roxbury. She had many descendants, among them the late John Ruggles of Brookline.
- iv. Hannah.—Baptized in Roxbury Dec. 3, 1654. She married another John Ruggles of Roxbury, cousin to her sister's husband, May 1, 1679. She died Dec. 17, 1700, leaving seven children, through whom she has many descendants among the Ruggles, Spooners, Hollands and others. The Hon. Benjamin R. Ruggles, U. S. Senator from Ohio, was a descendant of hers, and she has at least one descendant now living in Brookline.
- v. Deborah.—Born May 17, 1657, died Oct. 20, 1682. Unmarried.
- 2. vi. John.—Baptized in Boston June 26, 1659.
- vii. Sarah.—Baptized at Roxbury, Jan. 19, 1662. Died young.
- viii. Edward.—Baptized at Roxbury July 12, 1663. Died June 12, 1664.
- ix. Sarah.—Baptized at Roxbury Feb. 18, 1666. Married about 1685, Joseph Griffin of Roxbury.
- x. Edward.—Baptized at Roxbury Feb. 15, 1668. Mentioned in his father's will in 1685.
- xi. Thomas.—Baptized at Roxbury, May 1, 1670. Mentioned in his father's will in 1685.

So of this family of eleven children, five daughters married, one died unmarried aged 24, and one died less than four years of age. Of the sons one died while a child. Thomas and Edward were both alive when their father died in 1685 and were then fifteen and seventeen years of age. But no records of their life beyond that time have come to light, and so with John alone we start a genealogical record of the second generation.

SECOND GENERATION.

2. JOHN² DEVOTION, son of Edward and Mary Devotion, was born in Brookline, and was baptized June 26, 1659. The greater part of his life was spent here, though his last years were passed in Suffield, Conn.

In 1680 it is said that his house on Harvard street (now known as the old Babcock house) was built. This was the year that he attained his majority, and he probably built this house as a home for his bride, as

about that time, or soon after, he married Hannah, daughter of Daniel Pond of Dedham. Their signatures may still be seen by anyone interested in them, as there is in the Brookline Public Library an old deed, dated 1706, signed by John and Hannah Devotion, and sealed with a seal which is perhaps the coat-of-arms of the Devotion family.

John Devotion seems to have followed much in the footsteps of his father, as we find him at the age of twenty-five chosen "Perambulator for Muddy River," "to goe the bounds between Boston and Cambridge and Boston and Roxbury, and to renew the markes thereof." He is also chosen as "tithing-man" this year. After that we often find him chosen "surveyor for Muddy River," and the year 1690 he occupied the position of constable. In 1693 in the Muddy River town rate for the relief of the poor and defraying other town charges we find him taxed quite heavily. In that year he is again chosen "perambulator." In 1695 he is both tithingman and town surveyor; again, in 1699 he holds these offices. In 1700 his name is on the petition to "His Excellency the Governor, Council and Assembly" to have Brookline set off as a town by itself. In 1701 he is again chosen as surveyor, and in 1703 his name appears on our records as a public officer for the last time, when he occupied the position of "fence viewer for Muddy river." But when the second petition for a separate township was presented to the "Council and Assembly" in 1704, we find him still a citizen of Brookline, and one of the signers to the petition.

Ten years previous to this time he had bought of John Woodcock of Rehobeth "for £390 money in hand received" a tract of land containing 210 acres, with a dwelling house, barn and other buildings in Attleboro. In this conveyance is this curious item: "Also all the said John Woodcock, his right to and privilege in, a house and pasture at Wrentham for accommodation of his family and horses on Sabbath days and other public times as occasion may be."

This property, in 1711, John Devotion conveyed to John Daggett for £400. It seems hardly possible that he ever occupied the premises, as during the years to 1704 he was holding office in Brookline. He may have left here soon after that date, however, and have lived there till the sale of his place. Daggett's history of Attleboro says that "after selling his estate he removed to Wethersfield, afterwards to Suffield," and we find recorded that in 1715 he bought the homestead of Joseph Pomeroy, in Suffield, where he passed the remainder of his life, dying there in 1733.

John Devotion

AUTOGRAPH OF THE FIRST JOHN DEVOTION.



THE EDWARD DEVOTION HOUSE.

He seems to have been one of the most prominent of citizens, upright, worthy and much respected, and to have devoted much of his time to public affairs. His family were unusually well educated for those days; one son becoming a prominent minister, another a life-long teacher, the third one the generous donor to our own Brookline schools. At his death he left a good estate. In his will he names wife Hannah, five children and four grandchildren.

John Devotion's children, as far as known, were:—

3. i. Edward³—Who lived and died in Brookline.
4. ii. John, Jr.³—Baptized in Roxbury Oct. 15, 1682.
5. iii. Ebenezer³—Baptized in Roxbury, Oct. 19, 1684.
- iv. Hannah³—Married Joshua Leavitt of Suffield, 22 Jan., 1713. She died 24 Nov., 1726.
- v. Abigail³—Married in Swansea, Mass., Dec. 9, 1709, Obadiah Eddy.
- vi. Rachel³—Who married Joseph Kellogg of Deerfield, 10 March, 1719. This Joseph Kellogg was born in 1691, captured by the Indians 1704, and remained in Canada 10 years, returning to Deerfield in 1714.

THIRD GENERATION.

3. EDWARD DEVOTION (John², Edward¹) unlike his brothers, John the schoolmaster, who settled in Swansea, and Rev. Ebenezer who settled in Connecticut, remained in Brookline where he was born; and after his father's removal to Suffield he seems to have lived with his wife Mary, in the house on Harvard street. It is said that later he built or bought a house near Village square on Washington street in which he lived, until 1744, the year of his death.

He was a good citizen, ever alive to the interests of the town, and held positions of trust, as appears on the records, continuously from 1691 till his death. The same offices held by his father and grandfather were held by him. We find him often as surveyor, and he was often chosen as constable till in 1727 he seems to have begged to be excused and "the town by a hand vote excused him."

His name too, as well as his father's, is to be seen on the petition for the setting off of Muddy River as a separate town. This petition was finally granted and the place was incorporated as a distinct town by the name of Brookline on the 13th day of November, O. S., 1705. Who can doubt that pride in their town and love for it swelled the hearts of the

petitioners. Then came the question of a church. Up to this time they had united with Roxbury in public worship, but now they were a town by themselves and were "enjoined to build a meeting-house and to obtain an able, orthodox minister," "to be settled among them within the space of three years." This injunction they were unable to comply with and it was not till 1714 that their meeting-house was raised, and in 1717 the covenant was read in public and the church was started with a fellowship of seventeen men and twenty-two women. In this church Edward Devotion's seat in 1719 was "on the men's fore-seat in the body seats" and his wife's on the "womans fore-seat." The meeting-house, which stood across the road from the present Unitarian Church, was forty-four feet long and thirty-five feet wide, and contained fourteen pews. It was very dear to the heart of Edward Devotion, who served it as tithingman for many years, and who, in his will in 1744, left money for its first silver tankard. ("Item, I give to the Church of Christ in Brooklyn, one Silver Tankard containing one Quart.") This ancient piece of silver is still in possession of the Unitarian parish and is kept as a precious relic of the early days of the church.

Not only did Edward Devotion love his church, but he loved his native town, and was much interested in the education of its youth. This interest he manifested by giving to the town "towards Building or maintaining a School as near the Centre of the said Town as shall be agreed upon by the Town," all the residue of his estate after the payment of the many legacies mentioned in his will. And if the town should not agree upon a place the money was to be "laid out in purchasing a wood lot for the use of the school and the ministry of the town."

This legacy to the town seemed to be the principal question at many a town meeting. In 1747 at a meeting, it was voted to "Except what the Selectmen have Don Concerning the Legacy Mr. Edward Devotion Gave the town in his Last will." In 1748 the Selectmen were impowered to act as committee to "have care of the estate of Edward Devotion."

Among the assets was a mortgage note against Solomon Hill, to whom Edward Devotion had sold his house on Harvard street. Miss Woods tells us that this Solomon Hill was an adopted son of Mr. Devotion; but if so there is no evidence of it in the will, as he not only did not leave said Hill anything, but Mr. Devotion distinctly stated that, in case said Solomon Hill "should not redeem the said Estate and Discharge the Mortgage within the time limited" that the executors were authorized

and empowered to foreclose the mortgage. And in 1758 it was voted in a town meeting that "if the committee shall not agree with Mr. Solomon Hill, they shall proceed with him in a case of law" and it was also, that the committee "Shall have £6, 13s and 4d Lawful Money to inable them to Proceed (and more if wanted)." It seems that the committee did not come to a satisfactory agreement with Mr. Hill; and with Robert Sharp as its attorney, the town went to law with him and gained the property. The estate was then settled and the town received from Edward Devotion's widow, executrix, who had now become a Mrs. Gadcomb, the sum of 308 half-johannes, equal to \$3,696. There was also a "bight" of land given by him to the town "lying on the Back side of North Yarmouth."

Then in 1762 a town meeting was called and it was voted that the town should appropriate the legacy to the use of keeping a school; also, that "the middle school house where it now stands" (this was in the triangle of land in front of the Unitarian church,) be the place to keep a school with the interest of said legacy. It was voted too that "Mr. Nehemiah Davis, Mr. Nathaniel Seaver, Dea. Joseph White, Dea. Ebenezer Davis and Isaac Gardner be committee to take care of and let out" the legacy.

How long the money was used for this purpose we do not know. It was loaned to the Commonwealth during the Revolution, and repaid in depreciated continental currency; and its investment was such that eighty years after it was given to the town, it amounted to but little more than the original sum. It may be interesting to know that if the gift had been loaned at five per cent compound interest, it would now amount to over two and a half million dollars.

But though his money never built a school house, the beautiful school building on the old Devotion farm on Harvard street, next to the ancestral home, bears the name of the "Edward Devotion School" and is a fitting tribute to the worth of its name-sake.

It would be interesting to trace the history of the old house to the present time. It still stands where it was placed so many years ago, and having been kept in good repair all these years, it is in a remarkable state of preservation. The town now owns this old house of one of its first settlers. If it could speak, what tales might it not tell of Brookline history; of the events which have taken place since its timbers were raised, which have changed the little hamlet of Muddy River with its few scattering inhabitants, to the beautiful Brookline of today.

4. JOHN³ DEVOTION, Jr., (John² Edward¹) born in Brookline and baptized October 15, 1682, is first heard of at twenty years of age, at which time he seems to have completed his own education and to have fitted himself to teach the rising generation those things which were considered essential and desirable at that time ; and we find him in 1702 as the school-master of Swansea, Mass.

As it may be interesting to see what was expected of school-masters and how they were paid for their services in that early day, let us read from "Bicknell's Historical Sketches" the account of this teacher.

"In November, 1702, the people agreed with one Mr. John Devotion, to give him twelve pounds currant money of New England, paid quarterly, and the town to pay for his diet, also allow him twenty pounds to be paid by the town for the keep of his horse. In 1703 it was voted the school-master's abode shall be paid after the rate of four shillings per week in provisions at money price, and the salary is raised four pounds higher—a good commentary on the school-master's labors.

"In 1709 it was unanimously voted that the Selectmen should agree with Mr. John Devotion, our former school-master, for his services for six years ensuing.

"In 1715 his contract expires. So happy are the relations between master and people that the Selectmen are again authorized to treat with Mr. John Devotion to serve the town for the time of twenty years ensuing, if he lives and remains capable to perform said service, to teach our youth to read English and Latin, and write and cipher as there may be occasion ; upon the several conditions following, that is to say, said Devotion is to diligently and steadily attend to and keep a school five months yearly, and every year during the said twenty years, that is to be understood as the following: October, November, December, January and February, the first two months at or near his own dwelling on New Meadow Neck, the other three months the said Devotion is to remove his schooling to any part of said town provided he hath his board upon free cost and convenient for the school by any neighborhood or any particular man."

He did not live to teach until the expiration of this last contract, as he died before 1733. In 1726 he purchased two acres of land in Willimantic and, with several others, formed a company for manufacturing iron. They bought at the same time an "iron mine" in the town of Mansfield ;



THE EDWARD DEVOTION TANKARD.

Owned by the First Parish Church.

and the same year preparations were made for damming the Willimantic river, and forges were erected.

John Devotion was married twice; first to Elizabeth, probably the daughter of Samuel Stafford of Warwick. They had two sons whose births are recorded on the old Swansea records:—

- i. Constant⁴—born 27 May, 1706.
- ii. Thomas⁴—born 12 June, 1708.

Of these sons, Constant, then of Boston, purchased one-fourth of the "Willimantic Iron Works" of Joseph Leavitt of Suffield, on Sept. 28, 1728, which he subsequently sold to Joseph Ripley. In one place he is called a "hatter" of Boston.

Both of these sons were mentioned in their grandfather's will in 1733; their father had died previous to this date. Their mother must have died while they were children, as their father married as his second wife Priscilla Clark, Dec. 31, 1719.

Of this branch of the family we know of no further record.

5. REV. EBENEZER³ DEVOTION (John², Edward¹) was born in Brookline, and baptized Oct. 19, 1684. He lived in Brookline during his boyhood, went to Harvard College, and was graduated in 1707, being the second Brookline graduate of Harvard. In 1709 he went to Suffield, Conn., where he was ordained in 1710. That he was successful in his ministry cannot be doubted, as the church books show a large increase in membership during his pastorate. How much he was admired and beloved let his tombstone tell:—

"Here lies the body of the Rev. Mr. Ebenezer Devotion, late minister of the gospel in this town, who died April the 11th, 1741, in the 31st year of his ministry, aged 57. He was a man of sound judgment, great stability of mind, and singular modesty and humility. A true friend and faithful minister, steady in his attendance upon the altar, close and pungent in his preaching, and very exemplary in his life, a pattern of industry and religion and of all Christian graces. As he, while living, was greatly beloved, so was his death greatly lamented."

He was married three times. First, Aug. 9, 1710, to Hannah, daughter of Capt. John Breck of Dorchester. She died in 1719. May 12, 1720, he married Mrs. Naomi Taylor of Westfield, Mass. She died in 1739, and he married, Oct. 8, 1740, Mrs. Sarah Hobert of Mansfield, who survived him.

Ebenezer Devotion's children were:—

- i. Hannah⁴—Born Sept. 4, 1712. Died in infancy.
6. ii. Ebenezer¹—Born May 8, 1714, who became a celebrated minister.
- iii. Hannah⁴—Baptized April 29, 1716. She united with her father's church 1735. She married Capt. Joseph King 2 June, 1740, his second wife.
- iv. Mary⁴—Baptized Dec. 8, 1717. Married Deacon Richard Gay of Granby, Aug. 28, 1758.
- v. Ruth⁴—Baptized April 16, 1721. Married Ezekiel Bissell of Suffield, Dec. 23, 1742.
- vi. Elizabeth⁴—Baptized April 29, 1722. Married Jonathan Goodhue of Suffield, Nov. 16, 1743.
- vii. Ann⁴—Baptized Aug. 2, 1724. Married John Webb of Windham, Conn., July 30, 1746, and has many descendants.
- viii. Jemima⁴—Baptized May 14, 1727. Married Oct. 16, 1760, Rev. Adonajah Bidwell of Tyringham, Mass., who was a native of Hartford and a graduate of Yale College.
- ix. John⁴—Baptized July 12, 1730. Graduated at Yale 1754, ordained minister at Westbrook, the third parish in Saybrook, 1757, and died 1802, aged seven-two years.
- x. Keziah⁴—Baptized June 10, 1733. Married Daniel Smith of Suffield April 2, 1752.

So we find this large family of Rev. Ebenezer³ Devotion largely represented by daughters who married, and through them there are many descendants of many names, of the good old Devotion blood.

The two sons both graduated at Yale and both followed in the footsteps of their father in taking the ministry as their profession. We have no records of the family of John⁴.

FOURTH GENERATION.

6. REV. EBENEZER⁴ DEVOTION (Rev. Ebenezer³, John², Edward¹), was born in Suffield May 8, 1714. He was graduated at Yale College in 1732, and Oct. 22, 1735, was ordained, and took the pastorate of the Third Church of Windham, Conn., now Scotland. He was a scholarly man and many of his sermons were found worthy of publication. Not only was he a popular preacher, but like many of the clergymen of that time he was an ardent politician much interested in the important political questions of

the day. Not only was he interested in them, but he took an active part in politics, representing Windham in the General Assembly in 1760, 1770 and 1771. He died before the Revolution, but he had already used his influence against the arbitrary demands of the King and Parliament. We will let the stone which covers his grave speak for him, as it gives in a few lines an epitome of his life and character.

INSCRIPTION.

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"To the memory of that great and good man, the Rev. Ebenezer Devotion, first pastor of the Third Church of Christ in Windham. He was born at Suffield May 8th, A. D. 1714, ordained Oct. 22d, 1735, and deceased July 16th, 1771. Descended from venerable ancestors, he increased the honor of the family. His genius was universal, which, being cultivated with care and diligence, rendered him eminent in the various branches of science, and most particularly as a politician and Divine. He was an example of benevolence and hospitality, gravity and fortitude, sobriety and cheerfulness. An unshaken friend, a kind husband, a tender parent, a sincere Christian, a wise and faithful minister of Christ, greatly esteemed by all good judges of his acquaintance, and beloved by all his flock." And though this character given Mr. Devotion on his monument was so remarkably high, it was said to have been only the truth.

He married, 25 July, 1738, Martha Lathrop, a great-granddaughter of Rev. John Lathrop of Scituate and Barnstable, and daughter of Col. Simon Lathrop of Norwich.

Their children were:—

- i. Martha^s—Born June 3, 1739, married, April 18, 1761, Samuel Huntington, Governor of Connecticut and President of the Continental Congress. They had no children.
- ii. Ebenezer^s—Born August 10, 1740. This Hon. Ebenezer Devotion, of Windham, better known as Judge Devotion, was a graduate of Yale, one of the associate-judges of the County Court, represented Windham in the General Assembly in 1775, and several times afterwards, and both before and during the revolutionary war was an ardent patriot. Of his sons two, John and Samuel, were Yale graduates.

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